



SAFETY ALERT 05-01

17th Coast Guard District
United States Coast Guard
P. O. Box 25517
Juneau, Alaska 99802
907-463-2810 or 800-478-7369 In Alaska
www.uscg.mil/d17/m/CFVS.shtml

CALL FOR A FREE DOCKSIDE EXAM

MSO Anchorage	271-6700	MSD Sitka	966-5454
MSO Valdez	835-7223	MSD Ketchikan	225-4496
MSO Juneau	463-2450	MSD Kodiak	486-5918
MSD Dutch Harbor	581-3466	MSD Kenai	283-3292

FISHING VESSELS SINK IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

Background: The Seventeenth Coast Guard District Safety Alert program provides “Lessons Learned” from marine casualties in support of the Coast Guard’s “Ready for Sea” safety program.

Incident: It was midday and a good day to be out on the waters of Prince William Sound with no wind, calm seas and excellent visibility. The 68 foot wood purse seiner was about half a mile north of Campbell Bay near the Columbia Glacier, when they struck an iceberg. It took less than two minutes for the vessel to sink, leaving the vessel’s three crewmembers in the water. The three quickly got into their seine skiff and were soon picked up by another fishing vessel.

A week later in much the same conditions and about the same time of day, a 168 foot tender vessel ran into a charted reef. The steel hull hit the reef hard and was badly damaged. Those on board quickly got into immersion suits and called for assistance. Within 45 minutes a Coast Guard Boating Safety Detachment was on scene and three of the crewmen were taken off the stricken vessel. The master and the engineer remained with the vessel and when the tide began coming in, the vessel floated off the rocks and started sinking slowly, stern first. Three hours later the vessel was almost completely submerged, with only two feet still visible above the waterline.

Two days later a 34 bowpicker was gillnetting in Prince William Sound and the weather was the same as for the other two vessels. The only person on board was so intent on his fishing operation that he didn’t realize how close he was to the beach. The vessel hit a charted rock and began taking on water. A nearby fishing vessel had a diver on board and he tried to plug the leak. Unfortunately during the tow back to Cordova the plug gave way and the vessel sank in 80 fathoms.

Lessons Learned: Although the cause of the casualty remains unknown there are “Ready for Sea” safety factors that are relevant to this incident and several “lessons learned”.

1. Masters should maintain a constant lookout when transiting areas of known iceberg sightings, particularly near glaciers.
2. Charts should be reviewed before transiting areas of known hazards. This refreshes your memory about the location of those hazards so that you can position your vessel far enough away.
3. The bridge should be manned at all times and watchstanders should remain focused on operating the vessel in the same way a person drives a vehicle. If a break for coffee or a meal is necessary have a crewmember relieve the watchstander so that someone is always focused on running the ship.
4. Crew training in an emergency situation is critical. Conducting drills prepares everyone on board for emergency situations and increases their chance of survival.
5. The vessels did not have a current CG dockside exam. These free exams, performed at the dock, help identify safety deficiencies that can lead to loss of vessels and/or crew.